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ABSTRACT

This issue of "Epistle" contains articles viewing the work of reading professionals from four vantage points. Richard Allington assesses the value of doctoral programs from the perspective of a research trainer. Anthony Giordano presents a method for developing the independent thinking and problem-solving skills of preservice teachers. Rita Sullivan expresses concern about the graduate training of persons interested in working with learning-disabled college students and suggests methods to be used in a multidepartmental consortium or a coordinated center approach. Robert Palmatier provides a survey of last year's employment situation from the viewpoint of the employers. Regular features include a list of current job openings and miscellaneous items of interest. (JM)

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EPISTLE

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VOLUME IV

NUMBER I

WINTER 77

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EPISTLE

Athens, Georgia
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Dear Colleagues:

With a new issue and a new year EPISTLE continues serving as the communication forum for the Professors of Reading Teacher Educators Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association. Although at times the task has been arduous and often behind schedule, EPISTLE has continued through three years and presents improved format and content as year four is bravely entered.

Along with some annual cosmetic changes we introduce a revised group of editorial advisors. Richard Allington, Charles Peters, and Frederick Raetsch continue for a second year while Lee Mountain and Joan Nelson begin a first year. In addition Kemble Oliver shifts from assistant editor to editorial advisor. Each of the editorial advisors has written articles for EPISTLE and demonstrated longstanding commitment to the purposes of PRTE.

Debbie Holman, who signed on as typist half-way through volume three has retuned her typewriter to provide a bit larger type size. She has also participated in some format revisions which put author information on the initial page of articles and added author and issue information to page bottoms.

As usual the contents of EPISTLE depend upon contributors. Soliciting manuscripts continues to be a problem since the editor's circle of friends is limited. You and your friends are needed in this effort. Articles which vent concerns or present a situation of which you feel reading professionals are only minimally aware are most welcome. In fact, if you prefer to write a letter our pages could willingly accomodate that format. After all we are EPISTLE. Readers have repeatedly asked for more ideas related to program revision, methods for course instruction, and professional activism. What you have been experimenting with in your program, local or state organizations, or in inservice work will be of interests to your peers who face similar situations in their own programs. Your sharing will help EPISTLE to become more of a <u>real</u> communication forum.

This particular issue offers articles which view the work of reading professionals from four vantage points. First, Richard Allington takes another look at assessing the value of doctoral programs. His perspective is that of the research trainer. This article is of special interest since it challenges the findings of three earlier EPISTLE articles which provided doctoral program rankings of another sort.

A method for developing the independent thinking and problem solving skills of pre-service teachers provides the core for an article by Anthony Giordano. The rationale questionnaire is offered as a means for adding simulation to teacher training courses.

Rita Sullivan expresses her concern over the usual disjointed approach to graduate training for persons interested in working with college students experiencing learning disabilities. Her positive suggestions embrace methods which may be used in either a multi-department consortium or in a coordinated center approach.

Yours truely, in an effort to serve the membership's need to know about the job market, provides a picture of last years employment situation from the viewpoint of the employers. From a questionnaire the nature of the positions, methods for screening, and the characteristics of the successful job applicant are examined.

The first picture of this year's job market is provided by the several positions announced in JOB REPORT. An additional view of last year's hiring is provided by the relocations noted in MOVERS. Per usual the regular features are concluded with TIME CAPSULE and its offering of news and trivia worthy of note.

And a final note of import. If you have not paid your 1977 PRTE dues please do so right away. We have gone ahead and assumed that you wish to remain with us and left you on the mailing list for this issue. Excision and revision of the list will begin on March 1, as we prepare to mail the April issue. Please beat that deadline.

Best,

Bob

Robert A. Palmatier
Chairman, PRTE

Vol. 4, No. 1 January 1977

EPISTLE

The Publication Forum of
Professors of Reading Teacher Educators
A Special Interest Group of the
International Reading Association

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TIME CAPSULE

Richard Allington is an assistant professor of reading at the State University of New York at Albany.

READING RESEARCHERS: Where are they being trained?

Richard L. Allington

It seems that several times a year questionnaires appear asking for ratings of doctoral programs in reading on some criteria. The ultimate goal of each seems to be an evaluative ranking of institutions offering doctoral preparation in reading (Palmatier, 1974). Others (Palmatier & Rood, 1975; Palmatier & Austin, 1975) have compiled rankings based upon number of doctorates awarded in reading, or by tallying (Newton, 1974) the number of doctoral students listed as enrolled in the program in the International Reading Association publication Graduate Programs and Faculty in Reading (Wanat, 1971). However, each of the above methods of ranking programs has obvious limitations. For example, the survey method suffers from the lack of objective criteria upon which qualitative judgements should be made. The tallying, or quantity methods obviously indicate the programs with the largest enrollments but their data do not necessarily imply any qualitative characteristics of the program. Thus, while the profession has a general awareness of who are preparing how many, little has been written about comparative and qualitative aspects of the various doctoral preparation programs in reading education.

SOME DATA

One integral aspect of doctoral education is research, particularly the nearly universally required dissertation. For approximately a decade the International Reading Association has been annually recognizing excellence in dissertation research through its Outstanding Dissertation Award. Each year a standing committee composed of faculty from universities around the world evaluate abstracted

versions of dissertations submitted. These are then rank ordered by each committee member with approximately the fifteen highest ranked dissertations entering the final round. At this point copies of the complete dissertation are reviewed by each committee member and again ranked. Award recipients (which can number as many as six per year) are selected by the committee based on these final rankings.

Since the above procedure seems undoubtedly of a more qualitative emphasis than the tallying procedure and hopefully less subjective than the survey methods, the data concerning recipients of the International Reading Association Outstanding Dissertation Award were requested from and supplied by the Executive Director of that organization.

As indicated in Table I several institutions have produced more than one recipient of the award and the total number of universities graduating a recipient is really quite small (13). The University of Alberta is easily the leader in producing exemplary research at the dissertation level with the University of Chicago assuming leadership for American universities. The midwest seems the most productive region with 12 of the 28 recipients graduated from institutions in that region. New York state has three universities which have graduated recipients. Interestingly, however, there seems to be little correlation between number of program graduates and dissertation excellence. Table 2 presents the 10 most productive programs in terms of doctoral level graduates in reading, as defined by data presented in Palmatier and Austin (1975) and Palmatier and Rood (1975). These data reflect the number of earned doctorates for the years 1972-73 and 1973-74. No graduate of the five most productive institutions has received the Outstanding Dissertation Citation, in fact only the eighth and ninth ranked universities (Hofstra and Wisconsin) have ever had graduates so honored.

A similar situation exits with professors who direct dissertation research. The data, again from Palmatier and Austin (1975) and Palmatier and Rood (1975), indicates that of the 15 professors directing the largest numbers of dissertations, only three have had students receive the award.

TABLE 1: Universities graduating recipients of the IRA Outstanding Dissertation Award	
University of Alberta	8 recipients
*University of Chicago	4 recipients
State University of New York at Albany	2 recipients
*University of Minnesota	2 recipients
Ohio State University	2 recipients
Hofstra University	2 recipients
Michigan State University	1 recipient
Cornell University	1 recipient
University of Washington	1 recipient
University of California	1 recipient
*University of Wisconsin	1 recipient
University of Toronto	1 recipient
University of Missouri	1 recipient
*Indiana University	1 recipient

*Ranked Among Top Fourteen Doctoral Training Programs in Survey Reported by Palmatier (1974)

TABLE 2: Universities ranked by number of doctoral dissertations completed during 1972-73 in reading and 1973-74 in reading (from Palmatier and Austin, 1975 and Palmatier and Rood, 1975)	
1. University of Pittsburg	24 dissertations completed
2. University of Georgia	20 dissertations completed
3. Syracuse University	18 dissertations completed
4. Florida State University	16 dissertations completed
5. University of Southern California	15 dissertations completed
6. Boston University	15 dissertations completed
7. University of Northern Colorado	14 dissertations completed
8.*Hofstra University	14 dissertations completed
9.*University of Wisconsin	12 dissertations completed
10. Temple University	10 dissertations completed

*have had graduates awarded IRA Outstanding Dissertation Award

A similar lack of congruence is exhibited between the "Top Ranked" doctoral programs from Palmatier (1974) and those programs ranked by number of Outstanding Dissertation Awards received. Of the six universities having had more than one recipient, only two (Chicago and Minnesota) were among those ranked in the top 14 programs in the Palmatier survey. Similarly only four of the 14 universities having had a graduate receive the award are listed among the "top" 14 programs, in the Palmatier survey (1974).

There is more correlation between number of doctorates awarded in reading and ranking on the Palmatier survey (1974). Ten of the 14 "top" programs ranked there, appear also on the list of the 14 programs with the largest number of graduates as reported by Palmatier and Austin (1975) and Palmatier and Rood (1975). This lack of congruence between quantity and quality would seem to suggest that sheer numbers of graduates is more likely than quality of preparation to get a program ranked as a "top doctoral training program."

Regardless of what the reader feels may be the implications of this paper (if any), surveys will probably continue to devise alternatives for assessing program quality (Allington, 1974). It would seem that at this time there are no criteria for evaluating advanced programs (Allington, 1976), primarily because of the diversity of program goals. Developing researchers is not the goal of all programs and that is the only facet of advanced programs presented in this paper. Of final note is that no data was available on which institutions have had dissertations submitted. It may be that some of the quantitatively large programs have not encouraged doctoral recipients to submit their work to the competition. In any event, the data are quite clear: 1) exemplary dissertations to date have been produced at a fairly small number institutions; and 2) there seems to be little relationship between the quantity of doctorates awarded in reading and the incidence of "Outstanding Dissertation Awards" granted to graduates.

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Join us at Pre-convention Institute #29
May 2-3, 1977 in Miami Beach.....

The competency demands for individuals emerging from graduate training programs in reading education have changed greatly during recent years. Institute 29 proposes to provide a forum for articulation of these demands and presentation of innovative training components for meeting the needs delineated. Participants will cooperate in the development of guidelines for modification of training programs content and methods. Presentations and guidelines developed in the sessions will be published and disseminated by the Professors of Reading Teacher Educators Special Interest Group, sponsor of the institute. Intended for all individuals interested in the training of read- professionals at the graduate level.

Anthony Giordano is an assistant professor of education at the University of New Mexico. His doctorate was earned at Arizona State University in 1974.

THE RATIONALE QUESTIONNAIRE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Anthony Giordano

Most academic disciplines have a standardized format for instruction and innovative alternatives to that traditional format. In literature there has been a historic emphasis on certain works being read at a specific time by pupils in a single grade level. Today there is an innovative reaction to this regimen in which emphasis is placed on the response to literature rather than on the literacy works themselves. Similarly there is an alternative to traditional social studies instruction in which, instead of memorizing important facts, facts are introduced only as they bear upon and explain problems which the students perceive as relevant. In mathmatics and science, students are encouraged to understand the logic of inquiry rather than the results of special calculations and experiments. In other words, the traditional curriculum has been inverted. Instead of remembering and reciting incidental facts as the condition for meaningful application, students begin at the meaningful level and access more refined information in the context of program solutions. The inverted curriculm rearranges the priorities of the teacher centered curriculum. The traditional curriculum is teacher centered while most innovative alternatives focus on student goals.

Reading instruction is still dominated by an ostensibly teacher-centered format. When children come to school, they have already developed communicative proficiency through oral language. Therefore the most direct route to the

processing of visual language would be by way of this oral language competence. Instead, many teachers stress drill and recitation based on letter identification, spelling, and phonetics. Rather than building on existing natural language structures, children are forced to develop new, artificial schemas. And, only if students master these instructional expedients will they perceive the communicative rationale for the tasks they've been required to execute.

Why have other areas of teaching moved further away from the teacher-centered curriculum than has reading? It seems reasonable to dismiss the possibility that reading teachers are less resourceful than teachers in other areas. And it certainly isn't true that reading does not permit an inversion of its curriculum; for the oral language competence of children provides the ideal opportunity for such a rearrangement. The problem must then originate in the way teachers are taught to teach reading.

Reading education courses do discuss individualized reading, subject relevance, learning centers, and student tutors. By themselves, these methods could be used, and are used, in reading instruction without disturbing the traditional reliance on letter identification, spelling, phonetics, and other teacher-centered educational expedients. However, these techniques could also be used in implementing an inverted or child centered curriculum.

There is a substantive challenge which can be brought against any innovative curriculum. When teachers break away from a traditional system, they may and probably will have to fall back upon their own ingenuity to resolve problems. Since we can't realistically presume all teachers, or even a majority of teachers, to be ingenious, such innovation may be doomed to failure.

If all teachers are not prepared to immediately change from traditional educational procedures, the appropriate conclusion is not that necessary innovations should be discouraged; but rather that we should <u>prepare</u> teachers to make such departures.

The preparation of reading teachers might model the preparation of teachers in other fields such as English

Literature. Whereas English education was once a sequence of diluted methods courses, it changed to emphasize the substance of literature as a means of evoking creative responses from children. What reading education requires is not a catalogue of alternative classroom practices that have been developed by other disciplines. If it is to invert the priorities of its teacher-centered format, reading education requires an emphasis on language and language aptitudes and the development of methods whereby these aptitudes can be transferred to reading. The use of rationale questionnaires is an illustration of a method that encourages and prepares teachers to consider linguistic variables as they transfer to reading.

The pragmatic consequence for all reading instruction is communication. Questionnaires are a simple means of estimating whether students understand this rationale, or if, alternatively, they are misperceiving expediential exercises as ends in themselves. One method of constructing a rationale questionnaire is to ask reading education students to answer a set of questions which require them to explain the use of strategies or make judgements concerning problem situations. Thus, if students responded that the purpose of phonetic rules was to enable them to literally recreate the sounds of words, we could respond to this misunderstanding with the appropriate compensatory instruction.

The sample rationale questionnaire which follows is composed of six problems couched so as to determine whether students perceive the communicative rationale for learning expedients that are being employed in the classroom. An actual rationale questionnaire might identify specific expedients used by a particular teacher.

Sample Rationale Questionnaire

1. Mary and Jim are reading a story in which the word zoology appears. Mary sounds out the word but doesn't know what it means. Jim can't sound out the word but he sees that it has the work zoo within it. He guesses that the word must have something to do with animals. Mary thinks that she has read the word and

that Jim has not read it. Do you disagree or agree with Mary?

1 2 3 4 5

DISAGREE AGREE

2. Lois and Bill are reading a story about the ocean. There is a sentence in the story that, "The men loaded the ship." Bill reads the sentence as, "The men loaded the sheep." Lois reads the sentence as, "The men loaded the boat." The reason that Lois reads the word ship as boat is because her father owns a boat and that's what she always calls it. Lois says that Bill has made a serious error but that she has not made a serious error. Do you agree or disagree with Lois?

1 2 3 4 5

DISAGREE AGREE

3. Joan learned to read by memorizing the letters of the alphabet and their sounds. Sue has a young cousin who says he doesn't know the alphabet but can still read and understand written signs. Joan thinks this is impossible. Do you disagree or agree with her?

1 2 3 4 5

DISAGREE AGREE

4. John reads at different speeds depending on where he is. He reads faster when he is by himself than when people are talking around him. Harry always tries to read at the same speed -- slowly and carefully. Harry says that John should always read at one speed. Do you agree or disagree with Harry's advice?

1 2 3 4 5

DISAGREE AGREE

5. Susan repeats many words two or three times when she reads aloud; but Susan understands everything she has read. Tina never makes mistakes when she reads aloud; but she understands only part of what she has read. Tina thinks she is a better reader than Susan because she doesn't repeat words like Susan does. Do you disagree or agree with Tina?

1	2	3	4	5
DISAGREE				AGREE

6. Harold's teacher plays a game in class so that the students will learn new words; but Harold doesn't like the game and always does poorly. Harold doesn't care because he knows more words than anyone in the class and he can read well. Julie says that Harold will not continue to learn words and to read well unless he does better in the game. Do you disagree or agree with Julie?

1	2	3	4	5
DISAGREE				AGREE

One use of the rationale questionnaire is to assure that students can perceive communicative consequences. However, the primary justification for the rationale questionnaire is as a teacher education device which constrains teachers to consider the communicative consequences of instructional techniques they might otherwise routinely accept as effective. If we are unable to provide a convincing rationale from which to assemble a questionnaire about a specific instructional strategy, how can we explain the appropriateness of that strategy or expect students to accept the recommendations made in our reading education courses. Techniques like the rationale questionnaire are compatible with an inverted curriculum because they require teachers to make decisions about the conditions for accepting instructional expedients.

A teacher-centered curriculum is one which defers primarily to teacher limitations rather than student needs. Reading education has changed only incidental features of the teacher-centered format and consequently it has not been able to provide efficient instruction to the full range of students. A true inversion of the reading curriculum would emphasize communication rather than expedient techniques, and these techniques would be introduced only as they related directly to a communicative problem. The use of the rationale questionnaire is an example of an instructional technique that would expedite such an inversion.

....Jay Button, attempting to complete the dissertation for his doctorate from Syracuse University while working as a faculty member in reading at State University of New York at Oswego, penned this lament during a break from Chapter III.

Time - Out

I need a poem.

I've been writing descriptive material
over the past 2 days.

I just read it and noted the time.

I read 2 days work in 5 minutes and
it's not all that clear....neither is it finished.

I need a poem.

Dr. Rita Sullivan is the director of the Learning Resource Center, Kansas State University at Manhattan.

PREPARING INSTRUCTORS AND DIRECTORS FOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY LEARNING RESOURCE CENTERS

Rita J. Sullivan

Learning and resource centers at colleges and universities have evolved in recent years into centralized facilities which provide student services such as reading, learning disability, study skills and minority tutoring programs. Prior to this trend toward centralization, these services were located in several departments on a campus. While the trend to house these services in one location has become an established pattern, this has not been implemented in curricula for students who are preparing to teach in learning resource centers or who wish to direct such a center.

Kansas State University, like most universities does not have an actual department or teaching area for those who will instruct or direct college or adult compensatory programs. Adult education theory courses are taught by the Department of Adult and Occupational Education. Learning disability classes are taught in the Administration and Foundations Department, while reading courses are found in the Curriculum and Instruction Department. These three departments are housed in the College of Education. In a separate area, the Center for Student Development assumes the responsibility for teaching study skills.

The absence of a centralized department has created at least two crucial problems for those students pursuing instructor-training or director-training programs. First, students experience frustration because they have no "home" department which offers a planned sequence of methodology in basic skill areas such as reading, study skills, and learning disabilities. Second, these teaching professionals have no visible or responsible university source of assistance for inservice training.

In contrast, advantages can be found, too, in this characteristic lack of centralization. A student can gain a more diversified background and can learn about several philosophical approaches to teaching through exposure to various departments, rather than a centralized one.

While recognition of this fragmented curriculum and the need for change is occuring among administrators, a solution to this problem can only be expected to develop slowly. New departments often face the practical space problem as well as budget and staffing difficulties. This slow pace, however, should not be allowed to retard the growth of interest and motivation in the field or the sophistication of the training of tomorrow's instructors and directors. We must continue to examine and improve each existing curriculum whether it is under one department or many.

CURRICULUM PLANNING

When professors/administrators are planning an educational curriculum for the prospective instructors and/or directors of learning resource centers, he/she must decide which competencies, or qualifications, are required for those two types of positions. The learning center instructor must, of course, have basic skills in the diagnostic and remedial processes of reading. He/she must understand psychological and educational tests, knowing how to interpret test data to determine the level of difficulty of materials that will be appropriate to the needs of a particular student. The instructor should have knowledge of the many dimensions of the work of the reading and study skills teacher, as well as skills in the more important, basic areas. Garry (1974) has identified fifty task competencies for qualified reading personnel.

In planning a curriculum, are learning disability and reading teaching skills different and if so, should both be taught to the instructor? Is there a difference between the training of learning disability and reading personnel? Burgett and Dodge (1976) point out that there is some agreement among educators about the content of reading preparation programs. However, in the field of learning disabilities, there does not seem to be agreement about the content of professional training. Burgett and Dodge

explain that the philosophical approaches of reading teachers and learning disability teachers may be vastly different. While reading personnel are oriented toward the recognition of skill deficiencies and their remediation, learning disability personnel focus upon the psychological processes that may be interferring with learning. Of course both deal with perceptual and emotional problems, environmental restrictions, and educational facets.

Educators who are in the process of planning a curriculum must decide whether they believe that the skills and philosophies inherent in teaching learning disabilities are the same as those required of a reading instructor, or closely related. The curriculum should then reflect this orientation.

The prospective director of a center must, or course, acquire the same basic skills that an instructor learns. In addition, the director should include in his/her curriculum, courses dealing with supervision and administration. While learning these practical tools, the director-trainee must realize that his/her attitude toward the instructors and the students will be perceived by them. Moreover, these attitudes are, in sense, contagious. If instructors feel that they are respected by their superior, they will be influenced to deal with their peers and students in the same manner. This atmosphere created by a prevailing attitude operates subtly but with enormous power. This is a basic principle in business management.

The attitude of the director will also determine his/her role in the larger community of the college or university. The learning center performs a service to the entire academic community; therefore, its director must learn to maintain open lines of communication between the various departments and college faculty and the learning center staff. The director, in fact, is one public relations vehicle for the learning center.

TRADITIONAL AND NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

Instructors and directors must understand the characteristics of students who enroll in college improvement programs. As universities become involved in and committed to mass education, institutions must answer the expanding demand for accountability with more services and instruction on a more personalized basis. Sullivan (1975)

points out that learning center instructors today primarily work with non-traditional students whose characteristics must be understood by their instructors. The traditional student does enroll in the center for basic skills assistance, but he/she is outnumbered by the non-traditional pupil. Young freshman experience difficulty with the requirements of college instruction, as do middle-aged adults returning after a long absence. Kerstiens (1975) further characterizes the non-traditional learners as older, more pragmatic, poorer, frequently handicapped and exhibiting greater differences both ethnically and linguistically.

Learning center programs can only be developed when instructors and directors understand these new learners, the non-traditional students. According to Ewing (1970), instructors must integrate test data results with individual student conference information and a student's self-evaluation. This will help the skills instructor achieve a better understanding of his/her role in the classroom teaching situation. Further, instructors must consider the goals of each student who enrolls in a reading improvement course.

INTERNSHIPS

The foundations for a realistic appreciation of non-traditional students can be established through internships for prospective reading and learning skills instructors. Garry (1974) explains that the custom of emphasizing the remedial and diagnostic processes of reading restricts the potential value of the reading specialist. He stresses the importance of fulfilling internship requirements under certified and experienced reading personnel. At Kansas State University, internships are available in which these students obtain practical skills teaching undergraduates through work in the reading laboratory and classroom instruction. Ideally, those studying to become learning resource center directors would have had a teaching internship included early in their curricula.

Internships may be the best approach to affording prospective directors and instructors insight into multiple approaches to working with students. No longer do we believe that there is only one effective approach for most students. The students who enroll in the learning center for improvement courses do not conform to one stereotype. Therefore, their instruction should not be conformist.

CONCLUDING STATEMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Preparation of reading and learning disability skills instructors and directors of university learning resource centers is as multi-faceted as the students themselves. Although there is not one formulated, universally accepted approach to curriculum planning, some guidelines do prevail: (1) Knowledge of basic skills in the diagnosis and remediation processes of reading is essential. (2) The incorporation of courses and practical experience in learning disabilities must be an integral part of the program. (3) Prospective instructors and center directors need to be taught appreciation of the attitudes toward peers and students in a center and the position of that center in the academic community. (4) Knowledge of the traditional and non-traditional students is essential. Although characteristics of the non-traditional learner have been well-documented in the literature, individuals studying to become learning center instructors and/or directors must be taught how to accept the differences and meet the challenges of these new student types. (5) Internships should be an integral part of the curriculum for both the director-trainee and instructor-trainee. (6) Instruction in teaching behaviors, such as teaching techniques and classroom management skills, is important. (7) The program in each center should reflect the unique philosophical approach to teaching and to reading and learning disabilities of that center.

To meet these needs, teaching programs in reading and study skills and learning disabilities cannot be philosophically separated. If these programs are not taught under one roof, they should be better coordinated with staffs working more closely to produce integrated programs. This attitude is a reflection of the way in which reading and study skills and learning disability problems appear in individuals. They usually are intertwined and not separated. Instructor and director training programs must, therefore, reflect this reality.

Whether courses of studies for instructors are in one department or in several, a strong advisor, often the learning resource center director, must be available to guide these students, especially when the courses of study must be pulled together from various sources. Progress of prospective instructors and learning centers directors as they follow

their curricula must be carefully evaluated. These measures will facilitate the provision of good instructor education which then benefits the students enrolled in learning resource center programs.

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PUBLICATION OPPORTUNITIES...

Here in EPISTLE may be the place for just the sort of article you would like to write concerning frustrations in graduate reading education. Or you may wish to address a professional issue like confusion between the functions of reading and learning disability teachers. And your preference may be to describe methods you use for development and demonstration of graduate student competencies in reading instruction. WRITE NOW!

Bob Palmatier is an Associate Professor of Reading at the University of Georgia, and editor of EPISTLE.

SURVEY OF POSITION, SCREENING, APPLICANT, AND EMPLOYMENT VARIABLES FOR JOB OPENINGS IN READING EDUCATION ADVERTISED DURING 1976

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Members of the Professors of Reading Teacher Educator's Special Interest Group are keenly interested in the annual job market. Graduate students wish to know in advance what will be expected of them when they approach potential employers. Professors keep an eye on the market in order to properly advise students and as an indicator for pacing program expansions and direction changes. For the past two years EPISTLE has kept readers informed as to the jobs available in reading for doctoral level professionals. However, job advertisements tell only half of the story. In an effort to provide a picture of the applicants considered and the final job prize winners a survey was conducted among employers having job notices publised in EPISTLE during the first nine months of 1976.

PROCEDURE

A cover letter and two-page questionnaire were mailed to each of the employers advertising one of the 84 positions published in the first three issues of Volume III of EPISTLE. In each case the information request was mailed to the individual listed as contact person in the job announcement.

The questionnaire considered four areas of interest: 1) nature of the job and employer characteristics, 2) data on applicants and screening procedures, 3) profile of individual employed when position was actually filled, and 4) future expectations for job openings. The format included forced-choice check-lists, blanks for numerical data, and spaces for comments on applicants and screening procedures. Data analysis included tabulation of frequency of item selection and informal observation of relationships among various aspects of the data.

RESULTS

Of the 84 surveys mailed only 19 were returned (23%). It is important to note that questionnaires were returned only by institutions of higher education. Thus, the public school positions advertised were not represented in the data for this report. One of the returns included no information as the employer felt that the process had begun too late for good results and therefore decided to hold the position for readvertisement the following year. Of the remaining 18 responses 14 contained information on the nature of the position, applicant pool, and profile of person employed. Four positions were not filled as a result of the screening conducted. Data will be discussed in the same four categories used in the questionnaire.

Position Data. Six of the positions filled were at colleges or universities where a separate reading department exists. Three of the positions were joint appointments where reading was only a portion of the total work load. The remaining nine positions were reading assignments but within a department such as elementary education, curriculum and instruction, or education. Most of the positions were relatively low ranking with 11 at the assistant professor level, one at the professor level, and another indicated only as Director of Reading Clinic.

Responses to a check-list concerning the nature of the job are summarized in Table 1. Examination of this information yields a mixed picture of the demands of jobs offered during 1976. The demand for teaching at the undergraduate and graduate levels was nearly equal with only two jobs calling

Table 1

Incidence of Descriptor Selection by Employers

9 Teach Undergraduates	8 Teach Graduates
9 Teacher Education	4 Student Reading Improvement
5 Field-based included	3 Extra pay for extension work
2 Administrative Duties	0 12 month contract
10 Summer Extra & Available	0 No summer work
2 Quarter System	9 Semester System
1 Expansion position	9 Replacement position
4 Primary Emphasis	6 Elementary Emphasis
4 Secondary Emphasis	1 Adult Emphasis
2 Research Time Given	6 Publication Expected

for a combination of the two levels. Jobs in teacher education outnumbered jobs in college student reading improvement by more than two to one. Only five, or less than 20% of the jobs, called for field-based work while two included administrative duties. The twelve-month contract was not offered by any of the institutions but more than half indicated summer work as being available for extra compensation. Half of the teaching positions were indicated as being on the semester system, but only two identified a quarter system as the teaching schedule. In only one case was an opening indicated to be new or an expansion position. Nine jobs were identified as replacement positions. The level of reading instruction to be taught varied from job to job. Where indicated a single level was usually selected. However, in one case the job holder was expected to deal with both the primary and secondary levels and in another case teaching was to include primary, elementary, secondary, and adult courses. Only two positions indicated an allowance for research time, yet six indicated that publication was expected of the new employee.

The type of institution in which jobs are offered is of critical concern to most applicants. In the case of the jobs surveyed here four were at four year schools, seven at colleges offering the master's degree, one at an institution offering the Ed.S. degree as its highest in reading, and seven at institutions offering all degrees through the doctorate. All but three of the schools surveyed were state supported. Size of institution ranged greatly with two having less than 5,000 students, seven in the 5,000 to 10,000 range, 4 having between 10,000 and 15,000 students, four with 15,000 to 20,000 students and 2 with a student body exceeding 20,000.

Working conditions varied greatly from job to job. In some cases a new professor was asked to teach only four courses during an academic year while other institutions required that 15 courses be taught. The average number of courses required by the positions reporting was 7.3. In all but two cases each course taught would carry 3 credit hours. The size of department ranged from one to 12 with an average of 5.7 other faculty members per department.

A question of funding yielded only one position which was not firmly funded at the time of advertisement. In that case the advertisement indicated that the position was conditional upon funding approval.

Applicant Data. A major portion of the questionnaire sought information on the number of applicants and the nature of the applicant pool. Data in this category, as supplied by fourteen institutions, is shown in Table 2. The figures indicate that a large number of applications was received for each position advertised. For the 13 positions reported a total of 927 inquiries were received with a range of 30 to 200 per position or an average of 71.3 inquiries for each position. The number of completed applications was somewhat less but still averaged 52.6 applications for each of the 14 positions reported. Upon examination of resumes it was found that only an average of 14.8 applicants actually met the vital criteria qualifying applicants for positions. Thus, only 13 to 20 percent of those inquiring about positions actually met the advertised qualifications. Only one incidence of regional variation seemed worthy of mention. Two small Northeastern colleges reported receipt of 70 and 200 inquiries.

Table 2

Number of Applicants Involved in the Various Screening Categories

Screening Variables	Positions Reporting	Range	Total	Mean
Total inquiries received	13	30-200	927	71.3
Complete Applications Screened	14	20-150	737	52.6
Met vital position criteria	11	4- 50	163	14.8
Veteran reading professors	10	1- 30	75	7.5
New doctoral graduates	11	2-100	190	17.3
Withdrawn applications	10	0- 6	18	1.8
Professional meeting interviews	11	0- 15	57	5.2
Brought to campus for interview	13	0- 11	37	2.8
Final decision group	14	0- 6	47	3.4

Veteran reading professors applied for positions at a rate of 7.5 for each job. Applications from new graduates more than doubled (17.3) the average for veteran professors. Table 2 reveals that professional meeting interviews are an

important aspect of acquiring a job. An average of 5.2 interviews were scheduled at conferences for each position, with some recruiters meeting as many as 15 applicants at conferences. Unless, an applicant were one of the top three choices it is unlikely that he or she would be brought to campus for an interview. An average of 2.8 persons per position were actually interviewed on the employers campus although one institution invited 11 individuals to campus interviews. Being in the final decision pool meant that an applicant was among no more than six competetors. The mean number in the final decision group was 3.4 but this figure was somewhat deflated by the four cases in which the job was not filled when a final decision pool did not exist.

When given opportunity to comment on the general qualifications of applicants four of the contact persons responding indicated a generally high level of satisfaction. Two respondents indicated that candidates lacked breadth of experience and few actually met advertised job criteria. One department head went on to indicate that applicants for her position seemed to be English teachers, developmental reading specialists, or junior/senior high school teachers. She found few applicants qualified to work in or direct a reading clinic.

Employment Data. Given the large number of applicants it is of special interest to know the type of individuals hired for the positions. As indicated previously, four of the 19 positions were not filled due to lack of qualified applicants. Table 3 details characteristics of the 15 successful applicants. In 12 instances those employed were the first to be offered the position, thus a runner-up only rarely acquired a job as a result of the first choice candidate choosing to accept another position. Veterans were hired with twice the frequency of new graduates. In fact, individuals with three or more years of teaching experience captured nearly two-thirds of the positions. In instances where sex was reported males and females were nearly equally chosen (male = 7, female = 6). Only four jobs went to individuals outside the 30 to 40 age range. One successful candidate was reported to be a local resident, but none were reported to be graduates of the employing institution. Eleven of the 15 were not from the same state in which they accepted a position. None of those employed were reported to be minority group representatives. Married applicants were only slightly more successful in securing positions than single individuals.

Table 3

Characteristics of Individuals Employed for Positions Reported in Survey

First to be offered position	12
New Doctoral Grad	5
Veteran of 1 or 2 years of teaching	2
Veteran of 3 or more years of teaching	9
Male	7
Female	6
Under 30 years of age	2
30 to 40 years of age	7
Over 40 years of age	2
Local resident	1
Graduate from same program	0
From out of state	11
Minority group representative	0
Single	5
Married	6
Divorced	1
Widowed	0

Note: Not all respondents checked an item in each category and in one case a new doctoral graduate was also reported to be a veteran of 1 or 2 years of teaching.

Possibly of most interest is how the successful candidates went about finding their jobs. None of the programs reported hiring an individual as a result of a blind letter of inquiry from the candidate. However, in nine cases employers claimed that their first contact with the successful candidate had been in response to a job advertisement. Seemingly the second best approach was through a professional meeting interview, since four of those employed were first contacted by the employer in such a setting. Only two jobs were granted to individuals as a result of the first contact being communication between the employer and a colleague.

Future Expectations. While last year's job picture is of interest the year ahead is of primary concern. When asked if they planned to advertise another position for the following year, seven of the fifteen respondents responded positively. Four of the seven positions will be those unfilled this past year. Looking further ahead nine of the employers reported that they expected to have additional positions open in the next five years. Two indicated that two new positions are expected.

DISCUSSION

In considering the results the small and limited sample must be accepted as a limitation. Although no public school positions were included in the data, the higher education respondents appeared to equally represent all areas of the nation. Partial responses on several questionnaires further limit the generalizability of the sample and the findings.

The large number of jobs advertised indicates that jobs are available, however, the small response to the questionnaire leaves the question of how many of the non-respondents represented firm positions in which applicants were employed. For those reported less than 20% of the positions remained unfilled. In no case were there too few job applicants, but in all cases the number of qualified applicants was much less than the total number applying. New doctoral graduates by far outnumbered the veteran professors seeking positions but the veteran professors ended up with the positions more than twice as often as the new graduates.

Positions of all types are available, with no particular level, size of school, or type of program representing a significant portion of the total. It is possible to find

a job where neither research nor publication will be expected, since more than half of those responding did not indicate those aspects in describing their positions.

Although those who are successful job candidates represent a mixture, a typical profile emerges. Jobs most likely went to the first person offered the position and that person was usually a veteran of at least three years of prior teaching. In nearly all cases the individual was between 30 and 40 years of age and slightly more likely to be a white male than a white female. He or she was most often from outside the state of employment and was never a graduate from the employing institution. The successful contender was only slightly more often married than single.

In job seeking some direction is offered by the information on screening procedures and initial contacts with those eventually employed. Employers reported a consistent practice of interviewing potential candidates at professional conferences. In fact 28 percent of those employed in the positions reported upon were first contacted in such a situation. However, 64 percent of the successful job candidates first became known to their future employers through response to an advertisement of the position. Thus, keeping track of and responding to job announcements seemed to be the best method for securing a position.

For qualified individuals the future looks nearly as good as last year. Five of the positions offered in 1976 were not filled and will be readvertised during 1977. In addition three other employers are already planning to advertise additional positions during the coming year. Nine employers also expect to have another position to fill in the next five years.

In summary, it appears that the job market is alive and fairly healthy. Employers are faced with large pools of applicants from which to choose and normally find sufficient, although small, numbers of well qualified applicants to fill positions. For applicants the competition is great but if qualifications match the advertised job criteria the chances of landing a job appear to be no worse than one in 15. However, finding a job appears to require active pursuit through following-up job announcements and arranging interviews at professional conferences.